

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF CARE- GIVING TO THE AGED IN RURAL IGBOLAND OF EASTERN NIGERIA AND THE EFFECTS OF YOUTH MIGRATION: THE OLD TESTAMENT APPROACH

Echeta Uzonna Ph.D

Department of Religion and Cultural Studies,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

&

Ibenwa Christopher, N. Ph.D

Department of Religion and Cultural Studies,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

christopherndubuisi05@gmail.com

Abstract

The study examined care-giving to the aged in Igboland with particular reference to rural aged dwellers and also considered Old Testament approach to elderly care giving. The plight of the aged and the challenges associated with providing care for them in contemporary times has become a phenomenon of concern. Migration of the youth to urban cites was identified as the major cause of the problem, while other factors include changes in care-giving strategies and philosophy of the young about old people. Two hundred and sixty (260) questionnaires were distributed to young people who are either care- givers, or have lived with and observed aged people closely. Secondary sources for the study were from text books, journal articles, eBooks and internet materials. The study adopted qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and used simple percentage, statistics and standard deviation for the quantitative; descriptive qualitative method for the qualitative data. Findings showed that migration of youths from rural to urban areas led to families' minimal involvement in elderly care –giving. Rural aged are therefore subjected to physical and psychological loneliness because of the absence of their children. The study finally recommended the Israeli approach to elderly care- giving as a model for Igbo people and appeals to the government to collaborate with families and also establish reasonable welfare policies for the aged.

Keywords: *Elderly, Aged, Senior citizens, Gerontology, Migration and Diaspora*

Introduction

Indications of aging challenges in most world societies are evidenced from the statistical records and projections of the World Health Organization and United Nations. The challenges of aging and how to cope with caring for the elderly are therefore not peculiar to Igbo society. Aging is a natural process that most humans experience as life progresses and it is usually associated with weakness of organs and depreciation of strength. Aging characteristics are picturesquely stated in Ecclesiastes 12. It is generally believed that aging

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begins to set in from the age of sixty – five but for majority of Igbo people, the real aged are those who have reached the age of seventy and beyond (information gathered from oral source). The elderly are addressed as seniors or senior citizens in countries like Israel and America and the elderly class occupies a very important position in these societies. The study and the science of aging is known as gerontology.

The United States government is committed to the welfare of its senior citizens. The level of its commitment is shown by the way demographic records of old people are taken in order to put necessary policies and strategies in place. Oritman, Velkoff and Hogan (2014) carried out a research on the aging population in the United States and their findings showed that the trend in growth rate will pose a big challenge to the united states in terms of policy making , social security programs and medicare. Interestingly, United Nations as part of their concern for the welfare of elderly persons has chosen June 15 of every year as the world elderly Abuse Awareness Day. Featuring on this day are- deliberations on the challenges facing elderly persons by governments, people and stakeholders; other people from all works of life will be permitted to make their input on how to tackle the problem of the aged.

In the traditional Igbo setting, elderly people were cherished because they were believed to be invaluable to the society. People honoured and looked after their aged people collectively both at community and family levels. Given the fact that Igbo people were predominantly farmers, the young and middle aged were available then to render helping hands to their old ones. Another strategy which enhanced care-giving was the extended family pattern which implies that parents and children together with other paternal relations made up the family unit. The Igbo people lived in clusters in their small hamlets and this habitation style was a big advantage and aided communal sharing. Communal living meant that people shared what they had together with their neighbours and equally tackled their problems jointly. Part of child upbringing is educating children to honour and respect elderly people and to regard every elder the way they have regard for their own parents. It is the Igbo philosophy that a child is a child of all *-nwa bu nwa ora* and therefore children could freely attend to the needs of any elder as they would do to their very parents. Children could be corrected and disciplined by any older person if they misbehaved (Okwueze 2004).

Overtime, this philosophy and family structure began to fizzle out gradually especially with the dawn of modernization and technology. The urban cities

presented more attractive job offers and prospects of better lifestyle with ease. In response to this, most of the young people migrated to urban cities in their enterprising and entrepreneurial zeal to get money in order to support their vulnerable aged at home. For them, it was more acceptable to endure harsh conditions of life in urban cities than struggling in the village (Dike 1982). This mass exodus of the youth has created a gap in care-giving to the aged. In fact, the effect of youth migration to urban areas has worsened the plight of the aged in some rural communities like Obollo Afo, Oba, Nru, Ntezi, Oho ozalla and Aku villages. Most rural elders feel lonely and abandoned.

The condition of the aged is so crucial that Nigeria is described as the sixth worst place on earth for the old people (Maina 2013) and as having the highest rate of depression among the elderly people (Oguntola 2013). These papers identified various other challenges facing the aged as lack of proper health care, no social amenities, non- payment of pension, gross neglect or abuse of the elderly and lots more. Much emphases are placed on government minimal participation especially in not giving the aged desired assistance in health care and other social amenities, the worst is the delay/denial of pension. All these have aggravated the sufferings of elders in Nigeria. One other factor that compounds the problem of the aged in Igboland and Nigeria as a whole is the fact that the National Policy on the Care and welfare of older persons is still in draft form since March 2003 as voiced by Aboderin (Aboderin 2006). For Chukwu, the non implementation of the policy may This is probably be because old people constitute a relatively small portion of the entire population (Chukwu 2006).

The dilemma of the aged in Igbo rural communities necessitated this study. However, the study is not an added voice to various appeals of writers concerning their plight but an examination of how youth migration to urban areas has affected care giving to senior citizens in rural Igboland. It would also identify other related factors that worsen the condition of the aged and finally make an attempt to proffer solutions by using the Old Testament approach to elderly issues as model.

Review of Literature

The Igbo people are one of the largest three ethnic groups in Nigeria and their spoken language is generally Igbo language and a wide range of dialects. The Igbo culture area covers the settlements of Agbor, Kwalle (west Niger), Diobu, Umuabayi (Port Harcourt), Arochukwu, Afikpo, Isiagu (Abakaliki Area), Enugu Ezike, (Nsukka Area) and Ebu- West (Niger Igbo: Onwuejeogu (1981).

Onunwa (2005) adds that the Igbo people share a common boundary with Edo state in the West, Ijaw and Kalabari in the South, the Idoma and Igala in the Northwest, Tiv and Ogoja in the North. They are therefore found in Rivers, Delta and part of Akwa Ibom states. The people so discussed here are the occupants of South eastern Nigeria who have a total land area of about 15000sq miles about 41000kmls. Their spoken language is generally Igbo language and a wide range of dialects.

History has it that the Igbo people are a group of people who are believed to originate from Nri, a cultural group that shares a strong religious and cultural ideology with the Igbo in general. In fact, it is impossible to isolate what derives from Nri culture from what derives from other Igbo cultures. Nri people are known as both the progenitors and the priests of the whole Igbo race and as such they are high priests and king makers. Duhaze acknowledges that they take precedence of the other fraternities, priestly and social activities (Onwuejeogwu1981).The Igbo live in patrilineages called Umunna. Patrilineages grow to form villages and groups of villages form towns known as *Obodo*. Even though Onwuejeogwu (2000) holds firmly to the fact that Igbo origin is traceable to Nri Kingdom and claims that this is the only argument that has oral tradition back up, the question of the origin of Igbo people still remains a topic of debate.

The origin of Igbo people is a phenomenon that is surrounded with much argument that seems to be inconclusive. Nweke (2011) describes it as a mystery. In Onwu's assessment, Igbo origin appears to be a puzzle simply because people have not shown interest in such studies (Onwu 2000). However, many studies on Igbo origin have been embarked upon since this observation was made. Some of the contributions will be discussed here.

Commenting on Igbo quest to establish their origin, Afigbo commends this zeal as a worthwhile venture ideally expected from every group of people not just the Igbo (Afigbo 1975). Iweadighi (2013) describes Igbo origin as one shrouded with uncertainty and highlights the various versions of their origin. These versions are- the Israeli Version, the Middle East Version, Igbo Centred Version, the Awka/ Orlu version, the Idah Version, the Benin and Nri version

each making attempt to explain how the Igbo people emerged. He however concludes that they are irreconcilable versions.

Iroegbu (2011) systematically dwells on the meaning of the name Igbo, their origin, and their lifestyle and delineated how this group of people has continuously impacted their environ. He states that why Igbo people cannot know whom they really are and where they come from is due largely to their high migration culture. Iroegbu's contribution came up as a reaction to Ozodi Osuji's question of what the word Igbo means. Acholonu (2009) in her speech during a book presentation *They Lived before Adam-Prehistoric Origins of the Igbo: Never Been Ruled*, glaringly and convincingly gave the historical origin of the Igbo people. Her report emerged from a research of over twenty years and scientific discoveries in the area of archaeology. The historian gathered her data through paleontology (study of human fossils), genetic and DNA Engineering, Linguistics and also through esoteric records of lost scriptures. Catherine traces the origin of the Igbo as far back as the time of the early man/ *homo erectus*, who is the direct ancestor of the *homo sapiens* (modern man). From her investigation, She claims that the Igbo seeded other races of the world and gave them culture and civilization Their language also is traceable to the one world language/ mother tongue of humanity before God confused their tongue at Babel. Catherine's work reveals that the Igbo are the oldest single group of people on planet earth. To confirm her claims about Igbo people's early presence on earth, she states that the Yoruba god Obatanla has the inscription of the "Father of the Igbo nation" and this god is revered in Yorubaland. Acholonu's study being a later study than that of Onwuejeogwu with facts before us should be considered as authentic and should supersede the claims made earlier by Onwuejeogwu.

In traditional Igbo set up, the family structure was that of extended family which went beyond the immediate members of the family consisting of father , mother and their children. Other relations from the father were regarded as members of same family and they shared many things in common. Uchendu (1995) a known scholar in Igbo affairs writes extensively on the extended family of the Igbo people and explains how it operates. He notes that Igbo people lived together in what he describes as clusters, though they had their individual hamlets.

Ekeokpara regards the extended family as the social and ethical aspects of Igbo traditional society. He defines the composition of this family unit as father , mother, brother and sisters of their immediate families and those who

can trace their origin by blood to a common ancestor or progenitor. Every Igbo community has its own type of extended family system.

The family plays the role of educating the children on Igbo philosophy of being one's brother's keeper. Part of the education of children as they grew up was to accord respect to old persons who were not necessarily their biological parents. Giving voluntary assistance to them was equally encouraged. Interestingly, families were not run on the basis of the nuclear membership but extended family was more operative. There was a philosophical notion of communal existence where the spirit of brotherhood pervaded the atmosphere. In fact, there is the notion that a child is a child of all *-nwa bu nwa ora* and therefore children could freely attend to the needs of any elder as they would do to their very parents. Children on the other hand received correction and discipline from (Okwueze 2004). Communalism is one lifestyle of Igbo people that has remained overtime in spite of modernity and new developments They usually gather under the auspices of town unions which provides them a good interactive forum and enables them solve their immediate problems the best they can ,but that does not make them to throw away individualism. People still stick to their person decisions on where to live or the best job to do (Oguejiofor 2010).

Religiously too, the aged people who are believed to dwell in two worlds are revered even much more because of the advisory roles they play to individuals and the entire community. Spiritually, old people occupied a significant position in Igboland. They are believed to have the privilege of seeing spirits/ *ha na- ahu muo*. Only those that lived up to good old age and had good lifestyle were qualified to join the ancestral cult at death (Ugwu and Ugwueye 2004) .

A major trait of Igbo people which is widely acknowledged is their migration/*diaspora* (dispersion) tendency Chukwuezi (2011). The reason why they travel from the rural to the urban cities is because of their enterpreneurial business skill and this makes them to maintain dual locations. Igbo people are migrants to the core. Onunwa rates the Igbo as the most widely spread and travelled single ethnic group in Africa. He estimates that over ten million of their population live in other parts of the world (Onunwa 2005).This same fact is echoed by many who have either studied the Igbo or interacted with them.

In his own assessment, Ikpeanyiibe (2000) writes this concerning Igbo *diaspora* nature, the Igbo people are extreme migrants. They are the most travelled peoples of the world. Explaining this further, he gives an instance given by

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one Urakpo who said that any place Igbo people are not found is unsafe for human habitation. In fact, for him, if he gets to any place and finds no Igbo there, he will make haste to leave. Igbo people travel out of their domain in order to find greener pastures and more favourable economic gain. Any place they notice glimpses of success attracts them and as soon as they settle, they discover untapped opportunities and bring them into use and before long they develop the place. Dike (1982) describes Igbo people as known migrants. He explains further that their purpose of migration is to develop their home land. Young people are prepared to endure rough and hard conditions in urban cities and from their struggles send help to their vulnerable aged in the village. Uwechie speaks from a socio- economic perspective and maintains that Igbo people are developers and are all over the place, with a huge presence in Lagos and Kano (Uwechie 2010).

Nwoye (2011) reasons slightly differently by drawing attention to the fact that Igbo migration is not only prompted by economic pursuit. Sometimes other factors like colonisation and security can make them change their location. Issues of security have in recent times led to migrations of thousands of Igbo people both from outside and within. Significantly too it is to be noted that Igbo elders maintain that the Igbo people did not migrate from elsewhere to their present location in Nigeria.

Commenting on the issue of care giving in Igbo experience, Dickson also highlighted the importance of elderly care to Igbo community. In fact, he describes elderly care as a “key Phenomenon” in Igboland. It is the family that champions care giving and the government and other institutions are yet to standardize elderly care and welfare. Uwakwe and Modebe (2007) share the opinion of Dickson and note that the family is the bedrock and source of care for older persons in Nigeria. They conducted a research in some Igbo communities and came up with the impression that the extended family system should be strengthened otherwise older people will be totally abandoned. They make it clear that older people are prone to suffering disability and their situation gets worsened when their children desert them and also due to harsh economy. The various contributions reviewed make it clear that Igbo people as a group are devoted to their aged and had the extended family and the spirit of brotherhood that enhanced this elderly care giving. Works reviewed clarify the uniqueness of Igbo people as natural migrants, a people with high initiatives, enterprising, having a liberal spirit by regarding everywhere as home. One essential outcome of their migration is the development they bring to their host community.

Nonetheless, this practice of deserting home, brings significant effect back home. It is this effect of migration especially on how their aged folks are cared for which the reviewed works have not addressed that is the focus of this study. This study therefore intends to fill the gap of the nexus between the migration of youths and poor care giving to the aged in rural Igbo communities. Youth migration to urban cities create huge challenges to care giving. The aged are most times left with hired and alien people who may be unfriendly to them and even maltreat or abuse them. This study therefore attempts to establish the fact that rural aged are abandoned by their children and loved ones to a large extent; the rural aged are not effectively looked after in contemporary times ; the new strategies to care giving and the accompanying challenges; finally, attempt would be made to use the Old Testament approach to proffer solutions.

Hypotheses

The literature review draws attention to the issue of loneliness, abandonment and hostility of care givers towards the aged. Based on the facts from the review the following hypotheses are given

Hypothesis 1: There is significant relationship between youth migration to urban cities and poor care giving to the rural aged.

Hypothesis 2: The aged in the rural communities are exposed to more suffering than those in the urban cities.

Research Methodology

The study combined qualitative and quantitative strategies. The data for the study were collected through questionnaires, interviews and existing literature. The questionnaires and interviews represent the primary source of information for the study. Some towns were randomly selected which include Obollo Afor, Oba, Nru, Aku ,Ntezi and Oha Ozalla, all in Northern Igboland . Two hundred and sixty questionnaires (260) were distributed and all recovered. Respondents were both male and female, young people who have either been care givers to old people or those who have lived with them and observed them. The non literate aged were interviewed with the questionnaires by the use of simple vernacular and answers translated. Responses were sifted based on the four point scale (Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) and Comment, that best describes the extent to which the respondents agree with each question. The study adopted simple percentage, descriptive statistics and standard

deviation for the analysis of quantitative data, also descriptive qualitative method was adopted for the qualitative data.

Results

Table 1 The Family and Care giving to the Elderly

Family and Care giving	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Total
The family is a sure security for the aged	108 (41.5%)	117 (45.0%)	27 (10.4%)	8 (3.1%)	260 (100%)
Family members provide all necessary care to their old people	70 (26.9%)	116 (44.6%)	51 (19.6%)	23 (8.8%)	260 (100%)
It is a difficult task to care for old people in rural places	61 (23.5%)	120 (46.2%)	49 (18.8%)	30 (11.5%)	260 (100%)
Elders are difficult to please	61 (23.5%)	94 (36.2%)	74 (28.5%)	31 (11.5%)	260 (100%)
Other distant relations can extend help to old people in traditional rural community	70 (26.9%)	156 (60.0%)	25 (9.6%)	9 (3.5%)	260 (100%)
In contemporary times families find it difficult to care for their elders because of job demands	91 (35.0%)	116 (44.6%)	42 (16.2%)	11 (4.2%)	260 (100%)
Rural elders lack money	104 (40.0%)	79 (30.4%)	52 (20.0%)	25 (9.6%)	260 (100%)
Rural elders lack necessary facilities and human resources not just money	96 (36.9%)	108 (41.5%)	40 (15.4%)	16 (6.2%)	260 (100%)

Source: Field work 2014

The table 1 above sampled the opinion of the respondents on the care giving to the elderly by the family. In order to fully capture this, the study explored 8

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variables which addressed areas where the elderly needed help and sustainability. The first variable on the table is-“the family is a sure security for the aged”. 41.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that family is a sure security for the aged, also 45.0% of the studied population agreed that family is a sure security for the aged. On the contrary, 10.4% and 3.1% disagreed and strongly disagreed with the opinion that family is a sure security for the aged. The result however revealed that family is a sure security for the aged in Igbo land. Furthermore, the second variable on the table captured family as provider of all necessary care to the old people. The result shows that 26.9% strongly agreed, 44.6% agreed, -19.6% disagreed and 8.8% strongly disagreed; that family members provide all necessary care to their old people. The result implied that family members provide all necessary care to their old people. For the third variable -“It is a difficult task to care for old people in rural places” to this variable, 23.5% strongly agreed-46.2% agreed-18.8% disagreed and 11.5% strongly disagreed. From the reports gathered, it is a fact that taking care of the old people who live in rural places is a difficult task. The fourth variable in the table states that elders are difficult to please and the following answers were given: 23.5% strongly agreed, 36.2% agreed, 28.5% and 11.5% strongly disagreed. The result showed that elders are difficult to please. On the fifth variable in the table- other distant relations can extend help to old people in traditional rural community, 26.9% strongly agreed, 60.0% agreed, 9.6% disagreed and 3.5% strongly disagreed. This proved the fact that distant relations can be helpful in providing care giving to the aged especially in traditional society. The sixth variable is that in contemporary times, family members find it difficult to take care of their elderly ones because of job demands. 35.0% strongly agreed to this assertion, 44.6% agreed, 16.2% disagreed and 4.2% strongly disagreed. Therefore, from the result it is clear that families find it difficult to take care of their elders in contemporary times due to job commitments. Variable 7 in the table states that “rural elders lack money” and the following responses were given- 40.0% strongly agreed, 30.4% agreed, 20.0% disagreed, 9.6% strongly disagreed. The result revealed that rural really lack money since a greater percentage strongly agreed to this. The eighth variable states that “rural elders lack other necessary facilities and human resources, not just money”. Answers given are-36.9% strongly agreed, 41.5%, 15.4% disagreed and 6.2% strongly disagreed, proving that the rural aged also lack human resources, other basic facilities in addition to money.

Table 2: Rural- Urban Migration and the Problem of Care- Giving

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Rural-Urban Migration and the Problem of care-giving to aged	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Total
The youths migrate to the urban to find jobs.	161 (61.9%)	59 (22.7%)	24 (9.2%)	16 (6.2%)	260 (100%)
Young Igbo people like to stay in the village to look after their old ones	43 (16.5%)	46 (17.7)	74 (28.5%)	97 (37.3%)	260 (100%)
Elders in the rural communities are physically lonely because of the absence of their loved ones	91 (35.0%)	93 (35.8%)	43 (16.5%)	33 (12.7%)	260 (100%)
Elders in the rural places suffer psychological loneliness	59 (22.7%)	125 (48.1%)	59 (22.7%)	17 (6.5%)	260 (100%)
Rural elders have health problems	87 (33.5%)	85 (32.7%)	57 (21.9%)	31 (11.9%)	260 (100%)
Family members of rural elders make alternative arrangements for their aged	25 (24.2%)	99 (38.1%)	73 (28.1)	25 (9.6%)	260 (100%)
Families find it difficult to provide care for elders who live in the village	60 (23.1%)	97 (37.3%)	71 (27.3%)	32 (12.3%)	260 (100%)

Source: Field work 2014

Table 2 evaluated that effect of rural- urban migration on care- given to elderly in the rural area of Igbo land. In the bid to find greener pasture, majority of the Igbo youths migrate from their locality to a foreign land. The rationale behind the youths’ migration to the urban is to find jobs. However, the opinion of the respondents were sampled on the reason for youths’ migration to urban, the following were the outcomes of their responses: 61.9% strongly agreed, 22.7% agreed, 9.2% disagreed and 6.2% strongly disagreed. From the result, we extrapolated that majority of Igbo youth migrate to the urban to find jobs. The second item argued that Young Igbo people like to stay

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in the village to look after their old ones, the respondents portrayed the following shades of opinion: 16.5% of the total population strongly agreed and 17.7% agreed that young Igbo people like to stay in the village to look after their old ones while 28.5% disagreed and 37.3% strongly disagreed that young Igbo people like to stay in the village to look after their old ones. The result implied that young Igbo people do not like to stay in the village to look after their old ones. The old ones are weak and can hardly do much for themselves; the migration of the young Igbo people have an adverse effect on the old people. The third variable states that elders in the rural communities are physically lonely because of the absence of their loved ones and to this statement, 35.0% strongly agreed, 35.8% agreed, 16.5% disagreed and 12.7% strongly disagreed. The result simply shows that old people who live in remote places suffer physical loneliness. Item four also argues that “elders in the rural places suffer psychological loneliness” and the responses are - 22.7% strongly agreed, 48.1% agreed, 22.7% disagreed and 6.5 strongly disagreed. We, therefore, conclude that rural aged experience psychological loneliness due to non availability of their dear ones. The next item poses the argument that rural elders have health problem. 33.5% of the population strongly agreed to this, 32.7% agreed, 21.9 disagreed and 11.9 strongly disagreed. From the responses given we can deduce that rural elders are really having health challenges. The next variable raises the argument that “family members of rural elders make alternative arrangements for them.” 24.2% strongly agreed to this view, 38.1% agreed, 28.1% disagreed and 9.6% strongly disagreed. The responses reveal that families make alternative arrangements for their aged since they are away from home. The last variable on the table states that “families find it difficult to provide for elders who live in the village”. Responding to this assertion, 23.1% strongly agreed, 37.3% agreed, 27.3% disagreed and 12.3 strongly disagreed. We therefore conclude that families find it difficult to provide care their old ones in the village.

Table 3: Caring for the Old People in the Contemporary

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Absence of close relations poses problem for care-giving for the aged	1	4	3.01	0.994
Elders without relatives should be left without care	1	4	2.13	1.063

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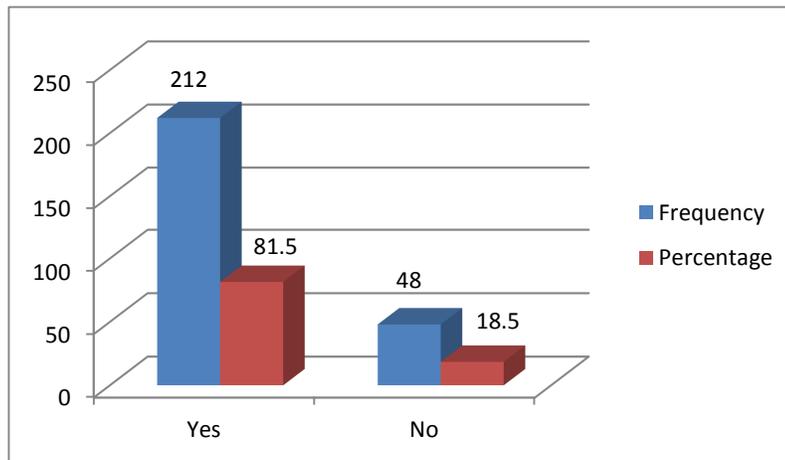
Elderly men without relatives cannot be helped	1	4	1.92	0.960
Establishing Old People's Home (OPH) is a good alternative	1	4	2.83	1.054
Old People's Home will help to solve the problem of loneliness	1	4	3.04	0.917
OPH will provide room for interaction among elders	1	4	3.12	0.807
OPH offers good solution for the aged men	1	4	2.80	0.925

Table 3 sampled the opinion of the respondents on caring for the old people in the contemporary. The minimum entry is 1 which represented strongly disagree, and the maximum entry is 4 which represented strongly agree. The mean score for "absence of close relations poses problem for care- giving for the aged" as indicated on the table is 3.01. The result is above the criteria mean which was set at 2.5 mean score, the standard deviation from the average responses of the respondents shows 0.994. This shows that the distribution of the opinion of the respondents, who selected strongly agree and agree are higher in number. The study accepts that absence of close relations poses problem for care- giving for the aged. The second sampled opinion is anchored on the argument that Elders without relatives should be left without care, the means score of 2.13 is below the criteria mean. The study therefore held that Elders without relatives should not be left without care. The standard deviation of the mean score is 1.063; the result implied that the distribution of the respondents' view is near equal, which means that their views are well represented. The above table equally shows that creating home for old people is a good alternative with a mean score of 2.83 and standard deviation of 1.054 that shows even distribution of the responses. The table also shows that old people's home will help to solve the problem of loneliness with a high mean score of 3.04 and standard deviation of 0.917 which implied that respondents who selected strongly agree and agree are higher in number. Responding to the view that Old peoples' Home will provide room for interaction among elders has a high mean score of 3.12 and standard deviation of 0.807.this revealed that most of the respondents agreed strongly

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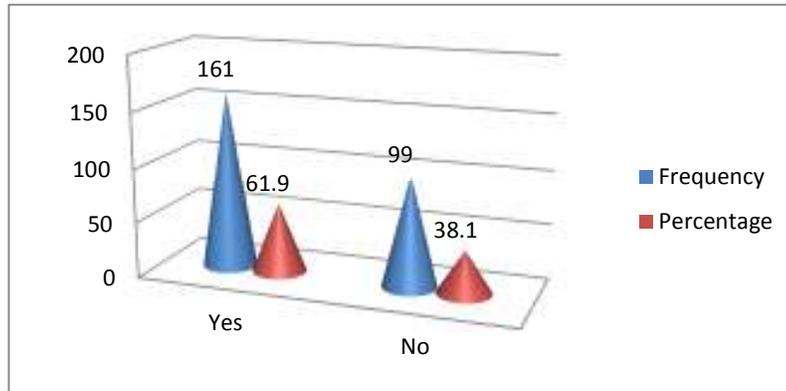
and many agreed to this option. It therefore follows that an old people's home will surely provide an avenue for interaction for aged when they stay together. Also, Old people's home offers a good solution for the aged members cause the mean score of 2.80 is above the criteria mean, the standard deviation is 0.925 showing that the respondents who chose strongly agree and agreed are more in number than those who disagreed. We can therefore submit that establishing an old people's home will solve the peculiar problem of the elderly men.

Figure 1: I have once been a care giver to elderly person(s)



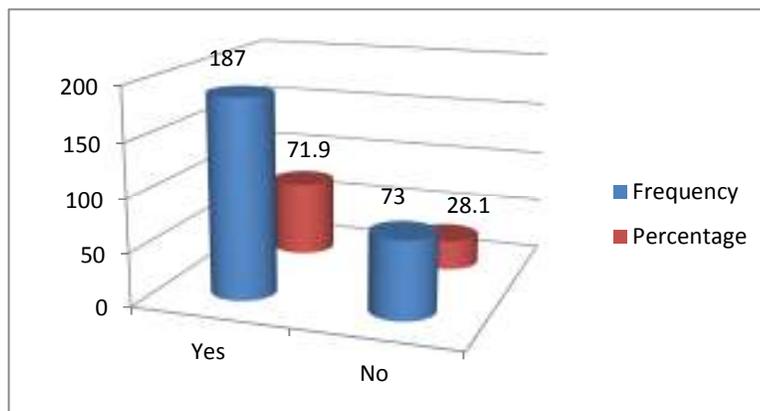
The above figure 1 sampled the personal experience of people who have stayed with the elderly person(s). The figure indicated that 81.5% of the sampled population affirmed that they have once been care givers to elderly person(s) while 18.5% opined that they have not been care givers to elderly person(s). The implication is that 81.5% of the studied population are reporting from standpoint epistemology.

Figure 2: The experience was exciting to me



The figure above that 61.9% of respondents found it exciting to look after old people and 31.1% did not enjoy the experience. Therefore, a greater percentage of Igbo people still enjoy caring for their aged.

Figure 3: I lived with the old and have observed them closely



From the figure above, 71.9% of the population actually lived and observed the old people, against 28.1% who did not answer from direct experience. The responses reveal that the information is derived from authenticated, reliable source.

Discussion/Evaluation

Caring for the aged in rural Igbo communities has taken entirely new shape in contemporary times. The changes adopted in recent times are necessitated by the relocation of the younger generation from their homes in the rural places to the urban in order to find greener pastures with which to sustain their old people at home. New job offers are more available in urban areas and the

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enterprising Igbo people are adventurous and daring able to accommodate harsh conditions outside home to make wealth. Absence of the youth and changes in the extended family system pose some problems in care-giving. Most families endeavour to put up new structures to replace the old. In some cases helpers are hired from elsewhere to assist their aged. Other family strategies include rotation of care giving by the children for their aged parents. This rotational method affords family members some relief so that one does not get burnt out. The traditional approach to the problem of old widowers and childless men is getting young wives for even though not all can afford it.

In spite of all these efforts, field reports are glaring clear that rural elderly people are lonely both physically and psychologically. The reasons for this loneliness are also evidenced from findings from the field work. Old people are generally difficult to please because they cherish their style and approach to issues and would not give in to young people's approach. They are mostly lonely because of the absence of the biological children and not that they are left all alone. In traditional societies there were forums where they could gather and interact with their mates but such forums are not found in most societies in modern times. At official times and in times of festivities they may enjoy such gatherings but it is very rare.

The plight of the rural aged in Igbo communities are worsened by government minimal assistance in putting up social structures, policies and welfare schemes that can complement the effort of families. In some rural locations, the aged hardly receive government attention because of the remote locations. Welfare gifts are diverted to other by their representatives (Josephine 2014). Churches provide occasional help during church special occasions for the less privileged, mothering Sundays or father's day celebrations and probably during Christmas.

The Old Testament Approach to Elderly Care Giving

God placed a high premium on old people in the Old Testament and this explains why honouring of one's parents was included as one of the laws handed over to the Israelites by Moses (Exodus 20:12). The law instructs children to honour their fathers and mothers so that they may live long in the land that God gave them. Honouring parents must mean according them respect and giving them all the rights and privileges due to them. One of the ways to honour old people is spelt out in Leviticus 19:32, where young people are enjoined "to rise up in the presence of the aged and show respect to them". The Old Testament makes it glaringly clear that God cherishes old age and considers the aged as vulnerable, invaluable and special people (Prov.

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20:29) who need assistance from the younger ones. They are reservoirs of wisdom and their wisdom is based on life experiences. In them is entrenched records of the past (Josh 3).

Israel's contemporary approach/recommendations: The Israelites still value their seniors and find them very relevant to the nation. They believe that the older citizens can make significant contributions to the nation and so they have special programs for them in work places. Currently also, they designed a particular university program where they can utilize their expertise and experience to conduct research. This is a reasonable idea that Nigeria should implement because old age does not render the elderly mentally unimportant. In fact, such opportunities make them relevant in the society. Many other policies and programs are run by Israeli government because of the importance they attach to the seniors and just a few will be mentioned here. One significant strategy is that which the government does by providing visas to foreign care-givers to assist families in care giving. The visa is issued to last for four and a half years. This strategy offers huge relief to families who are of the working class and are not disposed to help the old parents. It also suits seniors who may not like to leave home for somewhere else. The government also provide benefits for them just to supplement family care and lessen burdens on families. They have many day care centres for seniors and the centers are established at lower costs than the United States. The care centres emphasize care by the community rather than institutions. There are programs designed in Israel that are used for monitoring nursing homes. The driving force behind Israel's commitment to its old persons is that the torah charges them to look after old people for them to receive God's blessings of longevity.

Nigerian families and the nation at large should borrow some leaf from Israel and set up policies that would favour the elderly. They are as important in Nigeria as they are in Israel. The God of Israel is the God of all and his strategy of using Israel as a model to the world still stands. His laws are timeless as well as the blessings derived from keeping them. The younger generation of Igbo people need to re- address.

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ORAL INTERVIEW

Name	Age	Status	Town	Date of Interview	The Interviewer
Jemima Umobi	86	Retired teacher	Ezinifite	20/08/2014	Uzonna Echeta
Joy Okpala	67	Retired civil servant and Red cross officer	Nkpologwu	8/08/2014	The researcher
Rev, Bennett	53	Priest	Ihiala	13/06/2014	The

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Onwuchekwa					researcher
Josephine Okpala	54	Care giver to an elderly woman	Nkpologwu	8/12/2014	Researcher
Rev.John Nwoke	50	Priest	Nkporo	12 /07/2014	Researcher